THREE LITTLE WORDS
By Krista Boehnert

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ISBN: 978-1-60003-857-0

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THREE LITTLE WORDS

A Ten Minute Dramatic Monologue

By Krista Boehnert

SYNOPSIS: Carrie Klein receives a phone call from the guy in her life saying he needs to tell her something and asks to meet her. Carrie prepares to hear the big news that awaits her by getting dressed up and trying to keep calm. The three little words are spoken. Rather than “I love you” from the lips of her boyfriend as she’s led the audience to believe, the words “You have cancer” are spoken by her doctor. Carrie has prepared herself to hear “You’re perfectly healthy.” When the opposite proves true, she’s forced to grapple with the news of her own mortality.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female)

CARRIE KLEIN (f).................................18 years old, is talking about the phrase that changed her life.
CARRIE: I’ve been with him for a while now. At first we were was just casual, only getting together every now and then, but...for the past few months we’ve been seeing each other pretty steady. A lot. In fact, at this point in our relationship, we’re together at least a couple times a week. Sometimes more, depending. We didn’t have plans to get together last Friday, but he called and asked me if we could meet. Told me he had something to tell me. Something big. Something important.

I remember thinking. Wow, this must be it. He’s going to say it. He’s going to tell me those three little words. I was relieved that the day had finally come. All the time, all the months we’ve spent together, it means something to him. He’d finally figured out what. And now, he was ready to share it with me. To share those three little words.

When I recovered from the shock, I said I could meet up with him right after school and he said: “Good. I’ll see you then.” He sounded relieved that I’d show. Of course I was going to show. I’d been waiting for this day since the moment I met him. I wasn’t going to mess around now. I was desperate to hear what he had to say.

As soon as I got home from school, I headed straight up to my room to get ready. I didn’t have much time before we were supposed to meet up. I looked at myself in the mirror, and gasped. My outfit wasn’t right for this occasion at all! I was getting epic news in a matter of minutes, and I definitely needed to be wearing different clothes. My t-shirt and torn jeans would be fine if we were seeing each other under normal circumstances, but we weren’t. Today was going to be different than all the other times we’d spent together. Today was going to be life-changing. He was going to tell me those three little words and set my world spinning. I needed to be better prepared. I needed a wardrobe upgrade. Stat.
I realize how lame this must sound to you. And girly, but…well, you’re probably right. All I can tell you is that when I saw him, I wanted to be wearing an outfit that made me feel brave and beautiful. Ever since he’d called me, there’d been an entire battalion of butterflies whirling around in my stomach. Anything that would help me calm my nerves – even if it was silly, like changing my outfit – I was going to take it.

So…seven discarded outfits later, I ended up wearing a lavender dress with pretty pink flowers on it, and ruffles at the sleeves. The butterflies in my stomach totally approved because they calmed down a little. I swiped on some mascara and a bit of lipstick, and ta da! I was bold and beautiful and ready to go hear his news.

Well…that, and I had wasted a lot of time picking out an outfit. There was no time for the hot rollers now. My trusty ponytail was going to have to suffice; I had to get going or I’d be late to meet up with him. It was probably for the best, anyway. He’s used to seeing me in my jeans and tees, the dress would be enough of a shake up for him. Had I tossed in movie star hair on top of it, it would’ve been a complete shock to his system. He probably wouldn’t have recognized me, let alone tell me what he wanted to say.

Did I mention I was nervous?!? Turns out he was too. When I first arrived and we greeted each other it was super awkward. After all the time we’ve spent together over the past few months, it’s shocking that we could be awkward with each other, but we were.

Here’s the thing: this is the person I’ve spilled all my secrets to. I’ve told him all my biggest fears, my deepest hopes, and he’s listened patiently and never judged. He’s always been there with comfort and a listening ear. That sounds like nothing really, but when you get right down to it, it counts. It counts for a whole lot. That’s why I was so anxious. This guy knows all of me, and he’s about to tell me those three little words. This moment is huge for me. How on earth am I supposed to be calm right now?
So, anyway, there we are stumbling our way through a greeting, neither of us able to act normal. It’s like we both know things are about to be very different between us. Instead of being our natural selves, we’re acting shy, and a bit standoffish with each other. He was as bad as me— which made me feel better. At least neither of us was at ease with this situation.

I asked him about his day and he asked about mine. I gave him a quick recap—leaving out the part about changing into a thousand different outfits before coming to meet him of course—and then, he looks me dead in the eye, and says, “Carrie, about what I said on the phone.”

And that’s when I knew for sure he’s going to say them. Say those three little words. I try to be calm; to be all cool and collected before he opens his mouth and says the phrase that would change everything after the words were spoken aloud.

I failed miserably.

My breathing got shallow. My hands started to sweat. I was freaking out on the inside, and it showed. He paused and stared at me for a moment with a worried expression on his face, like he was debating whether to continue or not. But as far as I was concerned, he’d gone far enough down the road now, there was no turning back. For either of us. Even if he wanted to remain silent, I was going to sit there until he told me why he’d asked me to meet him.

He took a deep breath, and cleared his throat, and then opened his mouth to speak. I remember I bit my lower lip and held my breath in anticipation as I waited for the words to exit his mouth. Time stopped as I sat there. Waiting. And then...after all the nerves...and anticipation...and build up...the three little words came tumbling out of his mouth:

And there it was. Spoken out loud. Real. All these months, all this time we’ve spent together trying to figure out where this thing between us was going and now we knew. We had our answer. We’d arrived. Our destination? The big C.

He was supposed to say, “You’re. Perfectly. Healthy.” That’s what I’d dressed up to hear. Not this. Not the news that I’m sick. But that’s what he’d said to me: “You. Have. Cancer.”

Somewhere deep inside, I knew he was going to tell me this. Had since he’d called me that afternoon. I’d sensed that the wrong three words were going to come spilling from his lips whether I wanted them to or not. I was holding out hope of course, that he’d toss me the flip side of the coin instead and tell me I was just fine and congratulate me on being healthy as a horse…but…he didn’t.

Maybe it’s because I’d had an inkling about what he was going to say all along, but when he spoke those three little words out loud, it felt more like hearing an echo rather than experiencing it for the first time around. I remember staring at him after he said it, and he was looking back at me, expectantly. The shoe was on the other foot now. He was the one holding his breath and waiting. It took a second or two for my brain to kick into gear. Oh. Now it’s my turn. This is a conversation. I’m supposed to say something. Before I can get my tongue working though, he adds a new piece of information to the mix:

“It’s stage four.”

Now, I should probably know this from all the time we’ve spent together, but I don’t, so I’m forced to ask him: “How many stages are there?”

“Four.”
He doesn’t need to tell me more than that. I remember enough about the stages to know that they’re numbered, just like hurricane levels. Four’s bad. The worst, apparently, since there’s only four levels to begin with. If four is my starting point, my situation is as bad as it can possibly get.

The shock of this realization hits me like a freight train. In the space of a minute I’d gone from being healthy and alive, to dying. I opened and closed my mouth a couple times trying to get sound to come out of it. It took me a few attempts, but I finally managed to piece together two words: “How long?” I asked him.

This time, three different words exit his lips. It’s like he couldn’t bear to say more than three words to me at a go for fear I’d break and he might’ve been on to something because this time around the trio of words was even worse. Somehow, we’d gone from being awkward with each other to being in some kind of strange competition where we’re trying to see who can say the most with the least possible amount of words.

So, how long did I have to live? “Hard to say,” was his response.

That made me mad and my two-word answer came faster, and easier, with anger. “Ballpark it,” I snapped at him.

“Five months,” he tells me, and then seemed to feel bad about it because he quickly added, “maybe six.”

Like those thirty extra days are supposed to make me feel better about my death sentence. They didn’t.

I got up and walked out of there after that. I didn’t think there was any point in my staying any longer. What else could be said, really? He’d handed me my expiration date. There was nothing left for us to talk about.
That was a week ago now. He's been trying to reach me ever since. Keeps calling, leaving me voicemails. He's even resorted to sending text messages in the hopes I'll break my radio silence. I will...eventually...look, I'm not stupid; I know I'll need him to get through whatever's coming next.

That's the bizarre part, isn't it? The best thing to happen last week would have been for us to break up, so to speak. To never have to see each other again. Instead, we'll be going steady for the foreseeable future. Don't get me wrong, I'm glad he's there – even if I am imposing a time-out between us at the moment – I can't imagine having to face this without his help, it's just...

I'd trade anything to have a few more seconds of blissful ignorance. To not know what he told me. Because as prepared as I thought I was for the possibility of him saying those three little words to me? Well...it turns out...I'm nowhere near being ready to actually hear them. Not by a long shot.

THE END